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STATE FOR WHA/CAR (RBUDDEN)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [SNAR](#) [KCOR](#) [JM](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: JAMAICA: PRIME MINISTER'S POPULARITY FADES AMONG
PARTY LOYALISTS

REF: A. 06 KINGSTON 402

[¶](#)B. 04 KINGSTON 1259
[¶](#)C. 04 KINGSTON 1342

Classified By: DCM James T. Heg for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1.(U) SUMMARY: A long-time People's National Party (PNP) operative A) reports widespread disillusion with PNP leader and Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller (PSM); and B) predicts that when general elections are called (constitutionally due in October), unless the PNP wins at least 40 of the 60 seats in Parliament (they currently hold 34), PSM will face an internal party leadership challenge.
END SUMMARY

[¶](#)2. (SBU) Poloff met with Karen Cross on February 5 to discuss internal PNP dynamics. Cross is a long-time PNP organizer and party-insider who has developed and maintained a long-standing relationship with the Embassy. Cross supported current Minister of Finance Omar Davies during the PNP internal elections in his bid to replace party leader and former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson (ref A). Despite the loss of Davies to PSM, Cross fully supported PSM and has continued her work for both PSM and the PNP. In previous meetings with poloff, Cross has maintained her enthusiastic support of PSM and has defended her against all allegations raised by opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) leader Bruce Golding and the media. During this meeting, however, Cross' enthusiasm for PSM clearly had evaporated.

[¶](#)3. (SBU) Cross reported that there is widespread disappointment with PSM among both party loyalists and current PNP Members of Parliament (MPs); during a recent National Executive Council (NEC) meeting of the PNP, party members of the PNP had walked out of PSM's two hour speech and that the room was nearly empty by the time she had finished. Cross said that the speech itself was dedicated to two topics: an attack against Golding and a defense of her foreign travel (NOTE: PSM has been criticized in the media for spending nearly 10 million USD on foreign travel in the last year). Cross noted that the PNP are tired of her attacks against Golding stating "whenever Portia opens her mouth, bile about Golding spills forth."

[¶](#)4. (SBU) Cross explained that the middle-class members of the PNP had generally put aside their differences with and suspicions of PSM after her election to party leader. These PNP party faithful believed that PSM was "too socialist" and "too uneducated" to effectively serve as Prime Minister. However, in the one year since her election they believe that she has accomplished nothing to improve Jamaica, the government, or the party itself. Cross stated that it is "unforgivable that in all these years Portia's been in government, she hasn't bothered to learn how government

operates." PNP members, according to Cross, have returned to their original belief that PSM does not have the mental ability to effectively serve as either a party leader or as the Prime Minister.

¶5. (SBU) Cross has maintained in past meetings with poloff that the delay in holding general elections has been a result of PSM wanting to make sure the right people were running in the right constituencies. This time, however, Cross stated that the delay in calling elections is due to PSM's fear that the PNP will lose, and she will, consequently, lose all power. Cross reported that PSM may lose power irrespective of general election victory or defeat: should the PNP fail to win 40 seats in the next general election, party members may mount an internal war against PSM. (COMMENT: Winning two-thirds of the seats may be impossible, given the nearly 50-50 split in public support between the PNP and JLP). Although a Davies supporter, Cross said that the most likely challenger will be current Minister of National Security Peter Phillips who, like Davies, sought to succeed P.J. Patterson (ref A). Cross also suggested that there were some PNP loyalists who hope that the party will lose the general elections so that the party could avoid an internal battle for power all together believing PSM would either step down voluntarily or be easily ousted.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Cross has spent her adult life organizing and campaigning for the PNP. She has traveled all over Jamaica to support her party. This year, however, she reported that she will confine her campaign activities to St. Thomas (Western) in her effort to oust current JLP MP James Robertson who, she alleged, is a drug trafficker and money

launderer (ref B and C). (NOTE: She also alleged that JLP candidate for Portland (Western) Daryl Vaz is also a drug trafficker). Cross' openness regarding her dissatisfaction with PSM is highly unusual for her. She seems particularly concerned that the PNP is in danger of losing its vision and its path under PSM. She also voiced her concern that the formerly dominate PNP is losing supporters to the JLP. In particular, Cross is troubled by the willingness of PNP members to lose a general election in order to get rid of PSM. Openly discussing the walk-out of PNP members during a PSM speech is also highly unusual for Cross. Her willingness to discuss the PNP's internal problems may indicate the problems within the party are much deeper and more persistent than the chattering classes realize. An additional blow to PSM may come following the Cricket World Cup (CWC); infrastructure repair and improvement for the upcoming event have lagged far behind schedule. The British Deputy High Commissioner has reported that major improvements at Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston aren't scheduled to begin until the end of February (the CWC starts at the beginning of March). Short of the West Indies winning the CWC (unlikely), or PSM undertaking a major government initiative or reform, her tenure as the first female Prime Minister of Jamaica may come to an end much sooner than most expected.

Biographic Background on Karen Cross

¶7. (SBU) Karen Cross is a long-time Embassy contact. She has a history of aggressive visa requests; however, she has not approached emboffs in the last year with specific requests. She has been a member of the PNP her entire adult life. She is unmarried and has one daughter and one grandson. She comes from a large family (5 sisters and 2 brothers). Both brother are dead - one died when he was caught in cross-fire between two warring gangs. The other brother died from HIV/AIDS. She lives with one sister and a collection of nieces and nephews. Her other four sisters live overseas (in the U.S. and U.K.). She works tirelessly

to make sure her nieces and nephews receive the best education in Jamaica.

¶ 8. (SBU) Cross is not highly educated herself and speaks with a medium-thick accent and intersperses Patois with English. She does not hide her opinions on any topic and has been generally reliable with information. She is well-versed on American politics and is familiar with all the current candidates and current political issues. She is a self-professed fan of "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" and "The Colbert Report" noting that both satirical programs are often better able to capture the essence of political dialogue in the U.S. than the mainstream media. Unlike most PNP members, she openly admires President Bush. She disagrees with his policies; however, she admires and respects what she terms his directness and beliefs, noting "when im makes is mind up, im stick wit it." She hopes Hillary Clinton becomes the next President.

HEG